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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF/SPG, SE WILLIAMSON, NSC
FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: SPLM SEES SLOW PROGRESS AND REVIEWS SUBVERSIVE YET
RISKY ELECTIONS STRATEGY

REF: KHARTOUM 118

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: SPLM SecGen and GNU Minister for Cabinet Affairs Pagan Amun sees the National Congress Party's "totalitarian structure intact" but is currently taking the long view towards NCP stonewalling about the December 2007 agreement that returned the SPLM to government. Amun, although resigned to a bitter struggle, is confident that his party will prevail. The SPLM has returned to Khartoum stronger, and the NCP - shaken by the boycott - continues to give it at least marginally more respect. Amun also outlined three possible strategies for an SPLM electoral victory in 2009, the most innovative of which baits the NCP into vying for the national presidency while an SPLM parliamentary victory at the national level and in the South renders the top slot as little more than a ceremonial position. End Summary.

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¶2. (C) CDA Fernandez and CG Juba staff hosted GNU Minister for Cabinet Affairs Pagan Amun, GOSS US Rep Ezekial Gatkuoth, and Regional Cooperation U/S Cirino Hiteng Ofuho in Juba on January 27. A subdued Amun fielded Charge's questions about the SPLM's sentiments on the one month anniversary of their return to government. Amun admitted that "the totalitarian structure of the NCP is intact and active" even though efforts were being made to address North/South inequities in the civil service and implement other long-blocked CPA mandates. The NCP continued its long-standing policy of "isolating SPLM ministers upward." "Memos come to my attention selectively and with pre-determined decisions," Amun complained, and NCP civil servants remain largely pro-Islamist and members of the security service three years after the CPA's signing.

¶3. (C) Despite the difficulties, he argued, the SPLM was stronger, more organized and more respected in Khartoum than in the GNU's first inception in 2005. SPLM ministers met twice weekly to review and take positions on each week's Council of Ministers agenda. Redeployment of forces, while not complete, was moving forward slowly despite NCP cheating. In the absence of a fully-demarcated 1956 border, both sides were discussing the possibility of a buffer zone to reduce skirmishes between the parties but the problem remains that the SAF is so far south that even a move back 20 or 40 kms still leaves them inside southern territory. Like other SPLM officials, Amun saw the hand of the SAF and NISS in recent bloody fighting between heavily armed Misseriyya tribesmen and SPLA units in Northern Bahr al-Ghazal.

14. (C) Amun cautioned that, his cautious optimism aside, Abyei remained a serious problem. He thank CDA Fernandez for continuing to remind the world about Abyei despite Khartoum's threats to expel him (reftel). Amun sees the international community's inability to push for a resolution on the disputed region as "making the chances for Sudanese unity nil." Southerners view the impasse as proof of a failing CPA and of eternal NCP duplicity. Not only does it undercut support for the SPLM in the South, but it impairs the party's ability to build Southern support for unity and a national agenda of democratic transformation. "The NCP has not done one thing to make unity attractive," Amun asserted. The message from the people is clear; if the NCP cannot be trusted in the interim period to implement the CPA, then the South must use the 2011 referendum to walk away. "Under the current situation unity is impossible," he argued. Emboffs countered that the lack of real transformation in 2009 could imperil the 2011 vote. Amun agreed and noted that the SPLM had to use its national convention to decide upon an electoral strategy that made the NCP receptive to elections and unprepared for its defeat.

SPLM ELECTIONS STRATEGY

15. (C) Amun told the assembled US reps about the recent discovery of terrorist leaflets and DVD threatening to bomb SPLM political gatherings if held in Khartoum. Moving the upcoming national convention to the South would allow for increased security but strengthen the hand of those already focused on regionalism and separatism. "We need to move away from a position where we are satisfied with the minimum - the 2011 referendum and all it brings," Amun stressed. "Our

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challenge is to mobilize nationally, consolidate the South, and focus on the North." The party's second task was even harder: courting the NCP without compromising the SPLM. Pagan laid out three possible scenarios: the SPLM competes for President at the national level, the SPLM establishes a coalition with like-minded Northern opposition political parties or the SPLM runs a presidential candidate only for the Government of South Sudan and vies for majority control of the National Assembly, allowing the NCP to hold onto a presidency that becomes largely ceremonial.

16. (C) Amun's preference is for the latter: persuade the NCP to accept the regime risk brought on by real national elections by having the SPLM only contest the office of First Vice Presidency. This would entice the NCP to permit the vote by promising an assured victory for President Al-Bashir and the veneer of legitimacy that comes with it. By running on a platform of the nation's marginalized people, Amun argued, the SPLM could win a majority in the National Assembly and retain its hold in the South Sudan Legislative Assembly. The national Council of Ministers would then reflect the representation in parliament, giving the SPLM control of the cabinet and legislature at the national level thereby reducing the President of the Republic to figurehead status and elevating the First Vice President to de facto Prime Minister.

17. (C) Amun cautioned that this remained only one of several options. Some wanted Kiir to contest the presidency while others were pushing for a united front with Northern opposition parties. Both scenarios could prove disastrous to the NCP to the extent that Al-Bashir's hand would be forced to either cancel the elections outright rather than risk defeat or rig them to such a degree that, per Amun, "the violence in Kenya would pale by comparison." A way had to be found to reassure the NCP while changing the political dynamic in the country. "A new awakening by marginalized people could do this," Amun commented, while reassuring the security forces that they would maintain national level patronage. Give them the trappings of the presidency, he argued, and give the SPLM the power to safeguard the

referendum and chip away at NCP control at the national level.

18. (C) According to Amun, "things were moving" with respect to elections, despite delays elsewhere in CPA implementation. The last remaining funds for a national census (\$11 million) had been released. A six-month schedule for Sudan's democratic transformation had been a pre-condition for the SPLM's return to government. It covered passage of the elections law, the reform of existing legislation needed for free and fair elections (the Media Law, Police Law, National Security Act) and issues like voter registration. Amun asserted that its implementation would allow for elections to be held on schedule in mid 2009 (post finds this very unlikely). Gatkuoth cautioned that one of the items in the schedule, the release of 27 SPLM political prisoners, including party youth leader Yen Mathew, had not taken place and was now officially behind schedule.

19. (C) Comment: Clearly the SPLM is still struggling to develop a unified and final strategy for challenging the NCP over the next three years. All options appear to be on the table with the SPLM continuing to rely on the South's independence as a last resort, especially if the NCP cancels elections or cheats its way to victory in 2009. While Amun is a wily and aggressive political leader and is often seen as one of the most anti-NCP intransigents in the SPLM, we believe his analysis, while superficially feasible, underestimates the NCP's malevolent ability and the SPLM's room to maneuver. President Al-Bashir is unlikely to surrender control over the levers of real power in Sudan - the military, intelligence service, and money - no matter who wins the National Assembly. End comment.
FERNANDEZ